

Best. Movie. Ever.

Grade 8-12

What: A quick challenge to take students (Gr. 8 - 12) through a cycle of inquiry

Why: To get students excited about an inquiry question and practice a cycle of the inquiry process

When: As part of an introduction to inquiry

Prerequisite Skills: Communication skills

Who Needs to Be There?

- At least 2 students and a teacher - up to a full class
- Divide them into groups of at least 2. Groups of 3-4 work well.

Materials Needed: Devices for research, if possible

Time: 15-20 minutes

Phase I - A Real Question - “What is the BEST Movie of All Time?”

Provocation & Curiosity

- Explain the three phases of the inquiry process and explain that today, you and they will be asking a real question that no one knows the answer to, chasing down their own answers in small groups and sharing what they've found.
- Tell the class that you've seen some good movies lately. Ask students about their opinions of a few popular ones, and tell them you're not sure which one is the best.

Introduce the Inquiry Question

- Write the question “What is the BEST Movie of All Time?” on a board.
- Tell students that their groups are going to decide on the best movie of all time. The only conditions are:
 1. each group has to agree on a film, and
 2. later in class, each group will have a minute to try to convince the rest of the class to vote for their film.
- Tell them they have 2 minutes to discuss with their group, then they can ask questions.

Phase II - Chasing the Question

Research

- The question period is important. Depending on their age and skills, they may ask “research” questions like, “How do you define best?”, “Of all time? How do we know what movies were made in the olden days?”, or “We haven’t seen every movie ever made!”
- Write these on the board and quickly brainstorm a few possible answers. This will show students possible lines of research. (Top grossing box office? Best critic reviews? Best popular reviews? Most popular at our table?) If devices are handy, a few group members can research, while others record what they find. Make sure they write the question (and any subquestions) at the top of the page, to keep the research focused. This shouldn’t take more than 5 minutes or so.
- Sometimes they’ll ask questions that show where they’re stuck, like “Why won’t Melissa admit that Star Wars 17: The Triumph of Commercialism is the best film ever!”. This shows the importance, and challenge, of working cooperatively within an inquiry group. You might ask these students to choose the best movie they can agree on.

Skills Based Mini-Lessons

- While they’re working, visit each group and check in that they’re recording their thinking in some way. Model if needed.
- Point out where groups are refining or changing their original ideas based on new information. Cycles of improvement are an important part of inquiry!

Phase III - Beyond the Question

- After they've chosen their "best film of all time", they'll have a chance to convince the other groups that their movie is the best and explain how they decided. Each group will have a short time to persuade the others, using argument, acting out a scene, having the other groups guess the movie, etc. Students can use any mode of representation they can successfully pull off in a minute or two.
- Give them a few minutes to prepare, but don't let the energy subside.
- After each group has made its pitch, the class can vote for "The Best Movie Ever".

Reflection & Follow-Up

- This would be a great time to discuss what qualities make a movie great and explore the idea of objective vs subjective criteria.
- Debrief students about the activity. If they're not already familiar with the inquiry process, you can show them how they used all of the inquiry skills:
 - engaging with an interesting question,
 - working with a group to find creative answers
 - recording & analyzing their findings and
 - reporting out in their chosen way.
- Highlight their strengths as a class and the fact that they were engaged in the process. Explain that the content of their inquiry work is not assessed, only the skills and competencies they develop while doing it. You might point out one or two competencies that they developed during this inquiry.

If there are any questions that came from the activity, point out that they could be the questions for another cycle of inquiry.